

UNDER ONE ROOF



RADIO WAVES

Radio listening has surged this year as people spend more time at home and increasingly turn to the radio for companionship and a mood lift. Stations like Gulshan Radio in Wolverhampton are playing a valuable role in helping listeners and their communities stay in touch.

“Radio is all about connecting with people” says Nehemiah resident Geet Sangha, who is a radio presenter herself and speaks a number of languages. She volunteers at Gulshan, an Asian radio station with a large Punjabi listenership in Wolverhampton and beyond.

Geet’s chat and requests show is on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and she sometimes covers for other presenters too.

“I enjoy it because I’m very familiar with the old songs and films that many people love, as I do,” explains Geet. “It all started five years ago when a friend at the radio station asked me along to the studio to give it a go.

“It’s great to connect with your listeners. They become almost like members of your own family. We notice if a regular caller doesn’t call and wonder if they’re okay.”

Similarly, Geet’s listeners wanted to hear her voice when she found herself unexpectedly having to stay in India when lockdown first hit. “I’d only gone for a two-week trip but wasn’t able to get a flight home for a few months,” she recalls. “Listeners were keen to hear from me so I did speak on the radio from India.”

Nevertheless she felt fortunate to return home when she did; back to “my housing family” at Shanti Niketan retirement scheme where she lives – and back on the radio broadcasting live from Wolverhampton.

BAGS OF HELP



Gulshan Radio generously provided food parcels to our residents at Shanti Niketan, delivered by the station’s chairman, Gulshan Dhingra.

The gifts marked the birthday of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak, which is a sacred festival in Sikhism. It is one of the many food donation initiatives by faith-based organisations supporting our local communities.

RENT MATTERS

Now can be a costly time of the year – but don't let it cost you your peace of mind. Keeping up with payments now will mean you can have a secure start to 2021.

You must pay your rent in advance. Always give priority to paying your rent over other spending. The easiest way to do this is by Direct Debit.

If your circumstances have changed, or you are struggling to pay your rent for other reasons, it is vital you speak to us as soon as you start having difficulties.

We will always help you get things on track. We can also put you in touch with Birmingham Settlement for free debt and money advice. They cover all our areas, no matter where you live.

YOU SAID...WE DID



We've really missed the more personal touch of being able to visit you at home this year.

When the rules eased for a short time we were able to carry out 'walkabout' visits to some estates and housing schemes.

Our director of operations Kevin Fearon joined us. It was great to see you at a safe distance and hear your views.

Here are some examples of what we've done as a result of what residents raised with us.

- Improved the window cleaning at Woodside House in Shard End to include the washing of extra windows and fan lights above communal fire doors.
- Fitted new garden and communal fencing on Field Street in Wolverhampton.
- Put up extra safety information signs in the new lift at Nehemiah Court, Walsall.
- Scheduled repairs to signage at Henry Court in Dudley.

HERE FOR YOU

We are pleased to welcome two new permanent members of staff to our team.

Sian Reid has joined us in the role of housing administrator.

Paul Brown is the housing officer for most of our properties in Birmingham. You should have already received a letter from Paul if he is covering your area.



GOING RIGHT

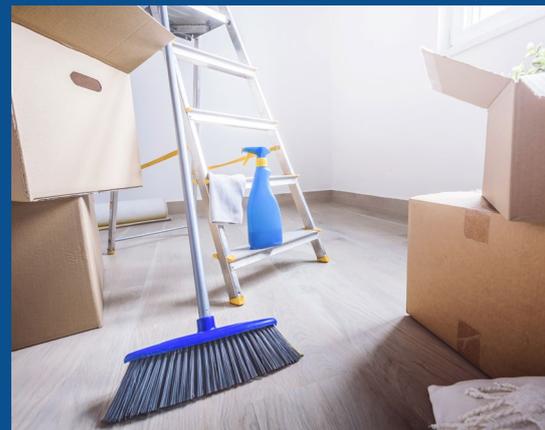
Please don't go without a goodbye!

There have been a couple of cases recently when people have only told us they are moving out of their home at the point they are all packed and about to leave!

This breaks the rules of your tenancy agreement. It also doesn't give us enough time to re-let your home quickly to someone in need of housing.

If you want to end your tenancy, you must give 4 weeks' notice before leaving. You can tell us on the phone but you must soon confirm it by signing our 'notice to vacate' form.

By then leaving your home in a clean, damage-free condition – and with your rent fully paid and all keys returned – we will give you £150 as a 'thank you'.



TACKLING CONDENSATION

Got wet windows on the inside? Finding little black dots on the walls?

Condensation can be caused by too much moisture or steam trapped in your home. It is not usually caused by a building fault. The moist air turns to liquid on cool surfaces such as windows, and mould can soon form.

It can happen in any home, especially well insulated ones. But small things can really help.

Keep your home reasonably warm

- Keep an even temperature throughout.
- Heat rooms, even if they are unused.

Keep your home well ventilated

- Let steam escape from the kitchen or bathroom by opening windows or using an extractor fan.
- Open one or two small windows each day for a while to allow a change of air.
- Do not block air vents, and keep trickle vents open.
- If your tumble dryer has a hose, make sure it is set outside.

Reduce moisture in your home

- Dry clothes outside, or on a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open. Do not dry clothes on storage heaters or radiators.



- Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles. Wring out the cloth over a sink.

If there is a lot of condensation you may need a special machine that takes the water out of the air. This is called a dehumidifier. These help a lot, but large ones can be costly to buy and to run.

Get in touch if you need more advice.

SEASONAL NOTE

Our office will close on Thursday 24 December and reopen on Monday 4 January 2021.

Emergency repairs, along with other repair work, will continue to be done during this time. So please continue to report any repairs that need doing by calling the repair line on **0800 849 1400** or **03030 30 1000** from a mobile.

WINDRUSH HELP

Do you feel unsure about your legal status in the UK? Have you suffered losses because you were unable to prove your right to live here?

The Windrush Scheme can help you get the documents you need free of charge. If you have lost out on things like jobs and healthcare because you could not prove your right to live and work here, it can compensate you.

You are entitled to this support if your parents came to the UK from any Commonwealth country before 1973, or you came to the UK from any country before the end of 1988. Some grandchildren and close family members may also be able to claim compensation.

After being criticised for its slow and low pay-outs, the compensation scheme has been revamped. People affected by the Windrush Scandal will now receive at least £10,000 in compensation.

Call the free helpline **0800 678 1925** to speak to the Windrush Help Team, or go online at

<https://gov.uk/WindrushHelpTeam>



KEEP ELECTRICS CURRENT

More than half of all accidental house fires are caused by electricity. A good landlord will carry out a regular free-of-charge electrical inspection of your home, which we do every five years.

These electrical safety checks are as vital to your safety as the annual gas service check. Our electrical contractors will inspect parts like sockets, switches and wiring to make sure they remain in a safe condition.

We will write to you with an appointment when an inspection is due. Please keep this appointment and give access, or promptly rearrange it if you know you won't be there to let them in.

The safety of appliances you bring into your home are your responsibility. If you have any doubts, get it tested or replace it.



WINNER



Mary (pictured left) received £50 in shopping vouchers for her winning performance in the tenants' online quiz we held for Black History Month.

She used them to stock up her new fridge with food and treats.

To take part in more fun and friendly quizzes coming soon, get in touch with Lakeisha. Her contact details are at the bottom of this page.

REPAIR WORKSHOP

Three residents are helping us to select our new repairs contractor. They are bringing their valuable insight from a customer perspective of what standard of service is expected.

The contract with our existing repairs provider, Novus, ends in the Spring. Suitably qualified repair contractors are applying to replace them as part of a competitive tender process.

Miriam, Mary and Jimoh took part in an online training workshop to help them with their role, including looking at repair response times. We'll hear more about their involvement and have an update on the result in the next newsletter.

Although we will soon have a new contractor, the telephone number for reporting repairs will remain the same.

When you report a repair, please remember to ask for and note down your order number. This is useful to have in case of any queries.



TIME FOR A SHOWER

Our investment in replacing the oldest bathrooms in properties is making a splash with residents.

Homes are being fitted with the additional feature of a shower in all new bathrooms. This is something that residents have requested and we are very pleased to be able to provide.



The improvements are taking place in a Covid-secure way to benefit 50 homes this year and many more in the months ahead. In the past year we have spent over £2 million on planned improvements like this, including new heating systems, kitchens, windows and doors.

We've also just finished the major refurbishment of a dated house, which we'd inherited with an impractical layout including a bathroom next to the kitchen but the toilet upstairs! The house has been completely modernised. It is now a warm bright home for the family who have moved in.



Please let our customer engagement officer Lakeisha Sewell know if you have any comments about this newsletter or any news to share for the next issue.

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